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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a four-fold typology developed as a general theory of student motivation to stay in school and work hard at learning tasks. Each of the four-fold categories is described with an initial statement of the specific source of student motivation, an analysis of how the source fits in more general motivational theories, and how the experiences of poor and minority students make them especially at risk for lacking motivation. The four-fold categories that are discussed involve the opportunities that exist for success in schoolwork, the human climate of caring and support, the relevance of school to a student's community and future, and the help that is given in attaining freedom from personal problems. Analysis of a sample of dropout students is presented that shows activities designed to prevent them from dropping out are not up to the task. This is because the tasks are not basic or intense enough to reform the primary causes identified by educational theories of low student motivation to remain in high school. Reforms are needed to change the atmosphere from the current emphasis on controlling and sorting students to a new emphasis on supporting and caring for individual learners through major modifications in the roles and responsibilities of teachers and students, including services geared toward assisting students with outside problems. (Contains 27 references.) (GLR)

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Dropout Prevention in Theory and Practice

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Is there a small set of common themes in the various explanations for why certain students drop out of school and in the panoply of current programs to reduce these risks? Such an organizing scheme would be useful for both theory and practice, going beyond the usual categories of demographic risk factors to better understand students' own reasons for staying in school and giving school planners a more comprehensive check-list of program components needed to increase the holding power of schools. A small set of program components with high priority in a clear theory of dropout prevention would also be useful in evaluating data on current dropout prevention efforts in American schools.

This chapter will present a four-fold typology developed as a general theory of student motivation to stay in school and work hard at learning tasks. To show its usefulness in organizing a rich array of ideas and potential solutions, major themes developed in other chapters of this volume and practical dropout prevention approaches described earlier will be located within this typology. In addition, recent national survey data on high school dropout programs for at-risk students will be analyzed to validate the typology's categorization of dropout prevention approaches and to describe how well actual practice meets the needs indentified in theory.

I. A typology of sources of student motivation to stay in school.

School officials designing a dropout prevention program for their own locality cannot easily learn from the experiences of others who attempted the same thing, because each of the numerous written accounts of such efforts stands alone as a case study combining different features into a unique program for the given situation. It is unlikely that a program developed elsewhere can be duplicated exactly in another site, because local talents and priorities for school reform, the

particular needs and interests of the students to be served, and the conditions of the school to be changed will differ. Instead of some brand-name prepackaged complete program to be replicated, local school reformers require a coherent set of general components to increase the holding power of schools that serve at-risk students which can be adapted to fit local circumstances. Each of the components could then be given different priorities to fit professional judgments about the most serious problems at the local site, and each dimension could be implemented in different forms to meet the nuances of the school's own demography and resources.

For the same reason, it has also been difficult for educational researchers to get a handle on dropout prevention activities in American schools. Most previous research has focused on profiles of the dropout student population rather than analyses of dropout prevention programs and their effects. While existing surveys have revealed that almost every school with a significant dropout problem claims to have a "dropout prevention program," how does one assess what is actually going on in each school and what special features are most effective? To further understand why particular approaches work better than others requires a testable theory that links particular general components of school reform to reductions in dropout rates of particular at-risk populations through some key student processes such as alienation or motivation.

A small group of researchers at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Effective Schools for Disadvantaged Students has developed a conceptual framework on dropout prevention approaches to better organize case studies materials on the issue and to provide a better research basis for developing

and testing theories of the causes and alleviation of school dropouts.*1 We assembled existing accounts of dropout prevention programs and existing interview data from dropouts themselves, from which we sought to derive common themes. We decided to develop our conceptual framework from the perspective of the student, and how general sources of motivation to stay in school and engage with schoolwork are influenced by particular experiences with the school environment. So we also considered general treatments on different types of student motivation in developing our framework*2. We present the resulting four-fold typology in this chapter with some recent reformulations to meet the goals of this volume.

Any typology is a theoretical categorization produced by the crosstabulation of two or more defining variables. Actually, we developed our four-fold typology as a stand-alone list of four generic categories before we recognized that the same categories could be generated by the intersection of two more general underlying variables. Figure One presents our typology in the more traditional format, using two initial variables to create the four key components.

We begin with the underlying variables of Type of Organizational Environment (Formal and Informal) and Point of Reference for the Organization Members (Internal and External). In terms of the School as the Organization of

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1* This group included Jomills Braddock, Edward McDill, James McPartland, Gary Natriello, and Aaron Pallas. Earlier discussions of this work have been published in Natriello, Pallas, McDill, McPartland and Royster, 1988, Natriello, McDill and Pallas, 1990, McPartland and Slavin, 1990, and Braddock and McPartland, 1993.

2** Our sources included students accounts of reasons why they drop out (Ekstrom, et al., 1986; Pallas, 1986; Peng and Takai, 1983; Rumberger, 1983; Wagenaar, 1987). 2) compendiums of dropout prevention programs (Branch et al., 1986; Natriello, et al., 1990; USGAO, 1987; Slavin, Karweit and Madden, 1989; Hahn and Danzberger, 1987; NCCE, 1988; OERI, 1987; Orr, 1987; Rumberger, 1987). 3) academic theories of students motivation (Ames and Ames, 1984, 1985, 1989; Brophy, 1987; Blumenfeld, et al., 1991; Lepper, 1988; Willis, 1991).

interest, the distinction of Organizational Environment translates into the school's academic goals as the Formal dimension and the social relations of the school as the Informal dimension. This distinction of school environments is similar to the recent general theories of alternative schools developed by Whelage and his co-workers (1989) and of effective learning environments by Bryk and his associates (1990), who use the terms "bureaucratic goals" and "learning community goals" as their basic dimensions. The other underlying variable in terms of school refers to experiences within school as the Internal Point of Reference and connections with the outside world as the External dimension. The intersection of these variables produces the four key components we will use to analyze different sources of student motivation to stay in school and work hard at school learning goals.

We will next describe each of the four-fold categories with an initial statement of the specific source of student motivation, an analysis of how the source fits in more general motivational theories, a description of how the experiences of poor and minority students make them especially at-risk for lacking the source of motivation, and a review of the themes and examples from earlier chapters in this volume that best fit the category.

Opportunities for success in schoolwork. Students need to feel successful in schoolwork to continue giving their best efforts at classroom assignments, but many at-risk students experience only frustration and failure in their quest for academic recognition and rewards. When a national survey of recent high school dropouts*[3] asked their reasons for leaving school on a check-list of 21 items,

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3* We will make repeated references to the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988

besides reporting the general reason "I didn't like school" the next most frequent responses included "I was failing school" and "I couldn't keep up with my schoolwork" (Ingels et al, 1992). Several correlational studies of factors that predict dropping out have found measures of school failure such as low report card marks and retention in grade to be the most powerful precursors of leaving school before graduation (Rumberger, 1987, Shappard and Smith, 1989). On the recent survey over 40 percent of high school dropouts had been held back a grade in school in the past two years (Ingels et al, 1992). The importance of school success was also emphasized in the same survey when the major reason dropouts would consider returning to school from a list of 17 items was found to be "you felt sure you could graduate."

Lack of frequent success at schoolwork deprives at-risk students of the motivation to stay in school that should come from the immediate rewards of good grades, teacher praise, and family pride. Without these positive responses to their efforts at classroom tasks, at-risk students lose their self-confidence as learners and stop caring about doing well in school. Rather than continue to pursue good grades which they find are usually out of their reach, they cease to place value on school success as something that reflects on the own worth and self-esteem (Natriello, 1989).

Many students from poor or minority backgrounds are particularly at-risk of being deprived of opportunities for school success because they have weaker resources at home and in their communities to support learning of academic

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(NELS:88) that included a survey of 1034 dropouts who left school between 1988 when they were eighth graders and two years later in 1990 when they should have been completing grade 10. About 90 percent of them had started high school and then dropped out (Ingels et al., 1992).

subjects. Although their families often care deeply about their school success, parents whose own educational accomplishments are weak and neighborhoods that have serious distractions from schoolwork place their students at a continuing disadvantage in competing for academic rewards. At-risk students usually begin school less well prepared for schoolwork and remain well below average for their entire school careers.

Many ideas have been presented in the preceding chapters to increase opportunities for academic success of at-risk students by changing specific school practices. The overview chapter by Legters and McDill includes offering intensive programs in the early grades to overcome initial disadvantages and build a firm foundation of basic reading skills; providing substantial extra help through peer tutoring or extended course time in later grades to prevent failures and grade retentions; and changing the criteria for school success to make academic rewards accessible to all students who work hard through added recognition for individual growth and improvement or replacement of boring paper-and-pencil tests with a variety of assessment modalities where all students can show what they have learned and will care to do so. Fine outlines new assessment approaches to make Philadelphia schools work better for at-risk students, including portfolios, exhibitions, performances and other ways for students to demonstrate competencies beyond the traditional short paper and pencil tests. De Young reports on a rural high school that was able to improve its high dropout rate by instituting a new climate of success for all students backed up by a number of new rewards for good attendance and course work and extra help for individual students from counselors, one-on-one teacher tutors, and administrators who place emphasis on

helping rather than punishing students who had problems in school.

The practical difficulties in bringing about real classroom reform are highlighted in the chapter by Hess, which describes how school-based reforms in Chicago to address high levels of student failures, retentions and low test performance have initially favored "add-on" programs such as after-school, pre-school or summer school. Hess reports that efforts to reform the regular classroom experiences of students have been much less frequent, in part because they require a high degree of teacher willingness to change and significant professional development time and staff support to implement new directions.

Rumberger and Larson describe how the ALAS program for junior high Chicano students provides immediate feedback to student behavior, including close monitoring of period-by-period attendance and regular (daily if necessary) teacher feedback to students and parents on classroom performance and attendance. Boykin's analysis of the educational reforms best suited for African American children includes a strong emphasis on talent development through routine opportunities for success experiences, as opposed to the penchant for assessing and sorting individuals that he sees as the traditional overriding perspective in our school systems with underlying assumptions about the distribution of human capacities which limit expectations, support for, and encouragement of all learners. For Hispanic learners, Valdivieso and Nicolau call for a standard core curriculum that includes no program or classroom tracking, is based on involved active learning activities, provides extra time and help from tutors and provides added class time for any student who has serious English language deficits or who needs help to succeed in other core subjects.

Human climate of caring and support. Students need to feel that the adults in their school are on their side and ready to help them in their pursuit of school goals. But many poor or minority students rarely experience a close positive experience with school adults or, even worse, come to believe that teachers and other school officials are primarily there to sort them into categories defined by lower grades and tracks rather than to support their efforts and ambitions as a learner. Rather than seeing their school as a supportive "community of learners" (Wehlage et al., 1989), many at-risk students see an impersonal institution that serves as an often hostile holding-pen for them during their growing years. A recent national survey of students' reasons for dropping out of school found that "I couldn't get along with teachers" ranked close to the top, right after reasons concerning failure at schoolwork (Ingels et al., 1992). Negative perceptions of teachers and the general school climate are often strongly reinforced by student peer groups who share the same backgrounds and experiences. The same national survey shows that nearly three quarters of recent dropouts had close friends who also left school before graduation, and almost the same percentage had high-school-aged brothers or sisters who had also dropped out.

The motivation derived from teachers and peers can be a powerful force in how individual students approach their learning tasks. Teacher approval can be a strong influence on student efforts from the earliest grades, and peer acceptance emerges as another dominant factor as students move into early adolescence and adolescence. Teacher expectations of a student's abilities and peer norms for a student's behavior will often become internalized as the individual student defines his or her own self-expectations and priorities. A teacher who communicates low

expectations of a student's ability to learn challenging material will usually discourage the student's' own confidence as a learner and interest in earning the teacher's recognition for good schoolwork. A peer group that places low value on doing well at schoolwork can enforce this viewpoint on its members and inhibit any contrary behavior.

Students from poor and minority backgrounds are especially likely to feel socially alienated from their schools and to be negatively influenced by the anti-school feelings of their peer groups. Such students are more likely to be in schools segregated by lower socio-economic class and race -- schools in which academic norms for completing school and going on to college are often weak and the school climate frequently fails to emphasize academic excellence. Disadvantaged students are much more likely to be assigned to the lower tracks and ability groups within their schools, where teacher expectations are often low and other learning resources are often weak. Such students in urban locations are more likely to be attending large departmentalized middle and high schools, where establishing a close positive relationship with teachers in difficult, especially if an individual is not a top student. And poor or minority students are often the victims of misunderstandings about teachers' directions or intentions because of the cultural differences between them, and sometimes the targets of remaining predjudicial attitudes by some educators toward race-ethnic minorities and lower socio-economic-backgrounds students.

The preceding chapters have also covered this topic in numerous ways. Letgers and McDill listed several ideas for breaking down the anonymity of the large departmentalized school and for building a supportive human climate: smaller within-school units using interdisciplinary teacher teams and adult mentor-advisors

to personalize the learning experience for each student; replacement of tracking with a common curriculum using other grouping practices to eliminate stigmatized learning environments with low expectations; and cooperative learning techniques calling upon peers to support and reward each others' efforts for team learning goals. The development of "chapter schools" in Philadelphia described in Fine's chapter shows that building a "community of learners" of teachers and students is possible when educators take on the task of defining the school climate and assuming real responsibility for each student's welfare.

Rumberger and Larson also focus on efforts to increase at-risk students' sense of membership or bonding to their school, describing how of the ALAS program provides adult advocates and increased extracurricular activities in a large Los Angles junior high school enrolling a high percentage of Chicano students. These authors describe principles the ALAS staff found important in establishing positive adult-student relationships. Valdivieso and Nicolau present similar themes in their description of the gulf between school and home perceptions of the expectations of schools, parental roles and responsibilities regarding their children's formal schooling, and proper behavioral manifestations of key attitudes such as respect, childhood conversations with adults, and family initiatives and relationships with agencies and officials.

Relevance of school to students' community and future. Students need to relate schoolwork to their own lives and future goals if they are to give serious attention to their classroom learning activities. But schoolwork makes little sense to many poor or minority students, because their classroom tasks seem boring and meaningless, with little connection to their own experiences and expectations for

later life. When dropouts report on national surveys that "I didn't like school" is their major reason for leaving school (Ingels et al., 1992), it is safe to assume they rarely found much interest in their school assignments or could identify personal reasons for getting involved with schoolwork. The same survey shows that when dropouts consider reasons for returning to school, they list "you felt sure you could get a good job after graduation" and "school was more interesting to you" at the very top, just behind their desire to be academically successful in achieving graduation.

Students who see little relevance of school to their own experiences and futures are deprived of the intrinsic motivation that comes from interesting activities and of the instrumental motivation that comes from activities that have a strong payoff potential. Passive learning assignments in the traditional teacher-lecture-and-student-listen mode give little opportunity for the initiative and spontaneity that can often be self-motivating to a learner. Intrinsic motivation must also be weak when the frequent learning objective for the student is to acquire a disconnected set of facts or algorithms to be regurgitated on the next test, rather than to acquire an understanding of a complex topic or to creatively apply higher order skills to a challenging problem. Moreover, what students learn in many courses or how well they do in classwork is seldom linked to their instrumental motivation of getting a good job or entering a favored career. Research has shown that employers pay little attention to records of school performance when hiring for most jobs not requiring a college degree, which weakens student motivation to excel on schoolwork (Bishop, 1989). School curricula in the major subject areas rarely integrate academic and vocational or career emphases, which have remained separate

programs and courses in most schools. Thus students may have a vague notion that their course content may be "useful" in later life, but few really understand how the course skills might apply to real world problems or how the course content may be prerequisite knowledge for particular career goals or later life roles.

Poor and minority students face particularly strong barriers to motivation from the lack of relevance of their school experiences to current interests or future goals. The inherent content of classroom activities is most likely to be passive low-level drill and practice learning tasks in the bottom tracks and ability groups where they are overrepresented. The curriculum at all levels continues to give scant attention to the cultural traditions and historic individual contributions of minority students' own ethnic heritages, creating further daily barriers to finding inherent interest and stimulation in their schoolwork. Because poor and minority students have weaker prospects for going on to college, they will not make the instrumental links between current efforts at schoolwork and college admissions which sustain the efforts of many other students even when the classwork is dull. Connections between good school behavior and employment opportunities are also weakest the lower level jobs which are the only ones many poor and minority students will qualify for following high school.

This issue of relevance of school for student motivation has been prominent in several preceding chapters, especially reforms to imbue school curriculum with cultural referents and current experiences that students can relate to from the perspective of their race-ethnic heritage and community. Boykin's chapter develops a multifaceted framework for understanding the importance of a culturally sensitive and culturally appropriate educational context for the schooling of African

American children. Boykin explains how children come to school with different sets of cultural rules that may interfere with learning by conflicting with their teachers' points of reference, regulations for behavior or criteria for positive recognition. He also reviews modern theories of learning in context that prescribe using and building upon the background and experiences brought to school by a child as the optimal basis for cognitive growth and motivation to learn. Valdivieso and Nicolau provide several ideas for tying the school program of Hispanic students to employment and college goals, including flexible schedules and work study programs so high school students can combine school and work, strong counseling especially for Hispanic females to link current schoolwork to realistic educational and occupational ambitions, and providing incentives and support during middle and high school for advancement to post-secondary education. Noley's chapter describes the long history of denial of American Indian cultural heritage in their childrens' formal schooling, and recent efforts by American Indian educators to increase the number of role models in the classroom and the respect for cultural integrity in the curriculum.

Other ideas for making school more relevant can be found in the Legters and McDill chapter, including curriculum reform to introduce active learning of higher order competencies without tracking for all students, connecting current schoolwork with college and employment opportunities through better information about the links for all parties, and integration of academic and career emphases in a common curriculum or in various career academic programs. Fine describes activities to support the transition from high school to college as one of the key ideas in the efforts to reform Philadelphia high schools, covering school Academies

and enriched vocational charters built around career themes, College Access Centers that assist the college application process, and endowment funds to close gaps in ability to pay for college by needy qualified students. Fine includes major changes in curriculum and instruction as another major theme in the Philadelphia efforts to engage students in active, multi-cultural collaborative learning to bring classroom relevance and interest for student motivation.

De Young analyzes the difficulties faced by many rural schools in motivating students to stay in school when the local economy does not offer many employment opportunities that require a high school diploma or the advanced skills taught in the secondary grades. He reports that a new high school program to bring high school students in to local workplaces and to arrange student visits to higher education institutions has helped students connect schoolwork to life after high school and has contributed to a reduction in the dropout rate.

Boykin's chapter presents nine specific dimensions of Afrocultural ethos that should inform changes in school settings and learning environments to motivate and support the human development of African American students. Valdivieso and Nicolau propose reforms at each stage of schooling that respect and use the cultural strengths of different Hispanic students and communities, including provision of preschool that relates to existing parenting styles, elementary grade help from teachers and counselors who reach out to parents and consider individual student needs, and adult Hispanic mentors and role models in the middle and high school grades who create a culture of concern and good example during these years of student development.

Help with personal problems. Students need to be free of serious personal

problems -- such as hunger, substance abuse, teenage parenthood or abusive homes -- if they are to concentrate on their proper school roles and responsibilities. But many at-risk students have developed self-inhibiting personal activities or come from families or neighborhoods that present major obstacles to their attention and energies for schoolwork. For example, 15 percent of recent female dropouts gave the reason "I was pregnant" to account for their leaving school on a recent national survey (Ingels, et al., 1992). About 15 percent of surveyed dropouts also reported that being suspended or expelled from school led directly to their decision to drop out (Ingels, et al., 1992), suggesting that a mismatch of school demands and personal coping skills is another significant source of the problem. The same national survey indicates that the need to care for or support family members and to hold a job got in the way of staying in school for about 15 percent of recent dropouts (Ingels, 1992) and about 10 percent had recently been in a drug or alcohol rehabilitation program. Such motivational distractions can make school concerns seem inconsequential for many troubled youth and rob them of their chance to experience and enjoy normal student life which causes further estrangement from school roles and routines. Too often the outside problems or added responsibilities simply negate any chance these individuals may have to think of themselves as students and participate in conventional school activities. The same national survey finds that one-quarter of recent dropouts report "I felt I didn't belong at school."

Poor and minority students are especially at-risk of falling prey to the various serious personal problems inside and outside of school and premature adult responsibilities that can lead to dropping out. The unemployment, crime and family instability in many poor neighborhoods create a breeding ground for various

problems of youth and contribute to a sense of hopelessness that drives many youth to behaviors that damage their chances of setting a good education.

Preceding chapters provide many ideas on how services provided by or coordinated with schools can help ameliorate outside problems of family or neighborhood. Legters and McDill review approaches to integrate social service agencies with school programs to address special students' needs and to create positive partnerships between school, home and community representatives. The New York City dropout prevention program, discussed in the chapter by Grannis, focused on first solving students problems outside of school so students and schools could then function successfully as intended. Fine discusses how access to community-based services was a key element of Philadelphia's multi-phased efforts to make high schools work better for disadvantaged students. Rumberger and Larson describe how providing a direct problem-solving training program for students can reduce school problems such as truancy and classroom misbehavior, and how attending to students' home or family problems is often also needed to solve their school problems.

The chapter by Grannis on New York City's Dropout Prevention Initiative and its successor Project Achieve shows the problems and limitations of investing heavily in social services delivered by community-based organizations as a primary focus to reduce course failures, retentions, absenteeism and dropouts. Besides the problems of coordination between different agencies and targeting of services to the most needy, who frequently have limited English proficiency, Grannis concluded that a social-service-oriented solution for student needs reflects attention away from the more fundamental changes by teachers and school programs that are needed to

create climates and experiences to support student efforts at school completion. Grannis cites evaluations that see merit in flexible high school schedules to open late afternoon make-up classes and opportunities to work for pay or to earn the GED, as well as within-school support systems such as peer tutors, peer mediation of conflicts, and smaller houses or subschools with adult mentors for each individual student that stay intact over a student's high school career. Valdivieso and Nicolau also see professional social services as an essential component of an effective learning program for Hispanic students, including family life planning to avoid early adult responsibilities that curtail realistic education or career advancement, and school-based sexuality education and health clinics to reduce the risks of a variety of self-inhibiting behaviors.

De Young, describing factors that have helped a rural high school reduce its dropout rate, includes the integration of physical and mental health agency services into the school program. Also relevant to our understanding of activities to neutralize outside distractions are Montgomery and Rossi's review of research on the sources of student risk factors and their conceptual framework of environment and school forces that compete as incentives and pressures for students' engagement in school activities. They consider not only the need to directly counteract multiple risks in order to close disparities with which students may enter school, but also the requirement of new educational programs to strengthen the motivational power of positive school climates and interesting school activities that can attract and hold student energies and commitments.

Noley's chapter describes recent direct efforts to deal with student problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and teen pregnancy in American Indian

schools.

III. Matching Theory and Practice: Results From a National Survey

The opportunity to assess actual practice in dropout prevention programs, in light of the theory-driven four-fold typology presented above, is provided by a recent national survey covering over 1000 public schools with questionnaires to principals that include our typology as well as detailed items on their perceptions of current sources of the dropout problem and their school's current responses to it. This survey, the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), covered a nationally representative sample of tenth graders in 1990 including student dropouts over the previous two years from the same cohort, along with data from their current school or the school from which they had dropped out. These data are used to validate our typology as an organizing scheme for dropout prevention approaches and to evaluate how well current programs match the actual needs and interests of at-risk students.

Validating the typology: The NELS:88 sample includes 535 public high schools in which the principal reported the existence of a dropout prevention program. These principals were asked several additional questions about their dropout prevention program, including the number of students who participate; the bases on which students are recommended for the program; whether the program includes formal classes and when, where and how often they are held; the principal's opinion on factors that influence students to drop out, and the following two sets of questions we used to validate the typology.

Questions Set One:

Dropout prevention programs operate in a variety of ways to retain students

in school. Some programs structure opportunities for students to experience academic success by tailoring curricula or providing additional instruction. Some programs create conditions for students to have positive relationships with peers or adults in the school. Other programs attempt to make students more aware of the importance of education to their future. Still others attempt to help students deal with external events in the family and community that prevent them from doing well in school.

What extent are the following issues addressed by your school's dropout prevention program(s)?

Question Set Two:

Principals were also asked to check off from the following list of ten items "which of the following services does your dropout prevention program offer?": (a) Special instructional programs; (b) Tutoring by teachers; (c) Peer tutoring; (d) Incentives for better attendance or classroom performance; (e) Close monitoring of student attendance or classroom performance; (f) Individual or group counseling; (g) Career counseling; (h) Job placement assistance; (i) Health care; (j) Child care or nurseries for children of students.

We analyzed whether the list of ten items formed a smaller set of empirically related items and whether the resulting set matched up with the four-fold typology. A factor analysis (Varimax rotation) was performed on the ten-item checklist to derive categories of services that were most often provided together in the same school. Four clusters of items resulted: academic services (primary loadings from items a and e), tutoring and counseling services (items b, c, and f), employment services (items g and h), and social services (items i, j, and d). We

then conducted a followup series of factor analyses adding one component at a time from the four-fold typology to the ten-item check list of services to study how each component lined up with the services factors. The typology fit the services factors as expected: Providing opportunities for academic success was most strongly associated with the academic services factor; Providing positive social relationships in school (which we have called "Supportive human climate") was most strongly associated with tutoring and counseling services; Communicating the relevance of education to future endeavors (which we have called "Relevance of school") was most strongly associated with employment services; and was most strongly associated with social services. Reducing the negative impact of family or community (which we have called "Help with outside problems").*[4]

These findings confirm that the four-fold typology provides four separate categories that cover the variety of existing basic dropout prevention components, and that the categories define particular subsets of services that have similar substantive meaning and are likely to be used together in the same school dropout prevention program.

Matching dropout prevention programs to student needs.

NELS:88 data can also be used to study what dropout prevention components are used most frequently in different school situations and how well they address actual student needs.

As expected, schools with higher current dropout rates are much more

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[4] There was some empirical overlap between the way Tutoring services and social services lined up with Positive social relationships and Reducing negative family or community impacts, which is reflected in the order with which the individual associations are expressed in the text. The following table gives the loading of each typology component in each services factor.

likely to have instituted a dropout prevention program to address the problem, and there is a clear rank ordering with which each of the four components is given major emphasis in the existing dropout prevention programs.

Over forty percent of the nation's tenth grade students are in high schools that report having a dropout prevention program, but the percents vary from less than 15 percent having dropout prevention programs where the current school dropout rate is negligible, to more than 80 percent having dropout prevention programs where the school reported dropout rate exceeds 1 out of 4 tenth grade students. Likewise, the percent of students in a school which participates in a dropout prevention program is strongly related to the extent of the dropout problem at the school. Thus, not surprisingly, schools with the most severe problems are most likely to have instituted special dropout prevention programs and to have enrolled high percentages of their students in them.

Among those high schools reporting a dropout prevention program, while the probability is grater than .50 that each of the four typology categories will be given major emphasis for the average student, there is a clear preference expressed for specific typology components. Ranked first for major emphasis in existing dropout prevention programs is "Opportunities for academic success" with a probability of .84, followed by "Relevance of school" with a probability of .76, "Supportive human climate" with a probability of .67, and "Help with outside problems" with a probability of .57. Recalling the examples of activities associated with each component, it appears that schools with serious dropout problems are most likely to offer some remedial course to help with "opportunities for academic success," and to provide some career counseling or job-related course work to help

with "relevance," but to give less emphasis to improving the "human climate" or to providing "help with outside problems."

The national sample of dropout students was examined separately to investigate whether the particular dropout prevention programs available in their school were given different emphases to match the particular reasons given for leaving school. Only about two out of three of the dropout student sample had left a high school that offered any specific dropout prevention program at all, which, while better than the total national student survey rate of about two out of five, indicates a serious shortfall in meeting the needs of at-risk high school students. Moreover, there were no patterns in the emphases given to different components of the existing dropout prevention programs to match the particular reasons given by students who had dropped out. The school programs for students who had dropped out generally followed the same rank order of components regardless of the reasons given by dropout students from particular schools. In particular, the component "help with outside problems" invariably ranked lowest in emphasis, even for students who listed reasons of personal problems such as disciplinary suspensions and expulsions from school or own family responsibilities due to their teenage parenthood or problems at home.

Regardless of the presence of some prevention activities under one or more of the typology components, it seems evident that the activities are currently not up to the task of significantly increasing the holding power of schools for at-risk students. Although most high school principals with dropout problems report prevention programs aimed at priority components, the dropout rates remain very serious in a great many high schools. Clearly the current activities are not basic or

intense enough to reform the primary causes identifies by educational theories of low student motivation to remain in high school.

It seems that most current school programs are add-on or supplemental approaches that do not get at the basic structures and characteristics of schools that turn off many at-risk students.

In addressing the component of "opportunities for academic success," schools appear more likely to add remedial classes and services than to address the basic issues of tracking, grading and promotion practices that contribute to student discouragement and failures in their academic pursuits. To be sure, investing significant additional convenient resources can be very important in helping students who are well below average to meet core academic standards. But as long as grading practices give no recognition to individual improvements, and tracking with unequal resources and retention in grade are the primary school responses to student diversity, it is unlikely that opportunities for academic success will be expanded enough to make a major difference in dropout rates.

In addressing the "relevance of school" component, schools appear more likely to add vocational offerings and career counseling than to install basic curriculum changes that actively involve students in interesting learning activities connected with their own experiences and real world issues or to experiment with more flexible arrangements that combine school and work experiences. Likewise, multicultural programs that go no further than recognition in textbooks of minority figures, with little change in minority adult role models on staff or desegregated schools and classrooms with cross-group support programs, are not likely to be effective.

"Supportive human climate" does not get the same attention in school dropout prevention programs as other components, even though students who drop out rank alienation from school staff as a prime reason for quitting school, second only to experiences of failure in coursework and grade promotions. The issue goes beyond the size and departmentalization of schools which limit chances for close relationships between teachers and students. It involves the perception by many students that school adults function to sort them, not support them in academic terms, and is reflected in the orientation of many teachers toward their subject-matter expertise rather than their share in responsibility for each student's academic success. Such a climate is sustained by the criteria used to assess students and evaluate teachers and by the structures of grades and tracks that condition relationships between students and adults in schools. Innovations in current practice, such as adult advisor-mentors and teams of students and teachers who work together and are judged together over sustained periods of a school career, can help penetrate these barriers. But basic reforms must also be made in setting and enforcing the priority goals of schools of sorting and selecting students versus supporting individual development of all students.

"Help with outside problems" is the component found to receive the least general attention in current dropout prevention programs, although it is needed as a first priority by some at-risk students. Again, it is not so simple a matter as finding resources for more add-on programs in physical or mental health services or other social service assistance. To avoid another dumping ground for problem students removed from classrooms, it will be necessary to include the student's own regular school team of educators in any activities using outside professional help. We do

not now understand how best to coordinate the work of different professionals focused on the problems and welfare of an individual student --because basic reform in bringing help with outside problems in the school context is not very far along.

Thus, in each key regard, incremental add-on changes have not proved to be powerful enough to solve continuing school dropout problems and are unlikely to make further inroads in keeping more students in school through high school graduation. More basic reforms are needed that address the underlying theory-based sources of student motivation in each key component.

Implications for New Program Directions in Dropout Prevention

Other chapters in this volume have argued persuasively that implementation processes need to be effective to bring new programs for dropout prevention into reality, including adequate resources for program design and staff development, and procedures to involve local educators throughout the design and implementation phases to gain strong local ownerships of reforms armed at conditions of the local site. This chapter is about the content of dropout prevention approaches that is necessary for the programs to work well, assuming that strong implementation processes are used to elicit proper local variations and to support adequate staff development along the way.

This chapter's comparison of the theory and practice of dropout prevention in American schools suggests two dimensions of new directions required to make major improvements in reducing dropouts in the future. First, programs should be developed around key components of effective approaches, rather than be based on implementation of some prepackaged brand-name set of activities that do not

promote local understanding of the theoretical basis of student dropout. Second, the actual changes under each key component must involve basic reforms in the roles and responsibilities of students and staff and in the character of learning activities -- the add-on and supplemental nature of most current dropout prevention activities fails to get at the real sources of most students' alienation from school.

Components of Change

School district leaders and local school improvement teams working on dropout prevention goals should be encouraged to develop their programs around a small set of key components of school improvement, such as the four-fold typology offered in this chapter or any other theory-based outline of a comprehensive approach to attract the energy and commitment of at-risk students.

A major advantage of building local school reforms around key components grounded in theories of the school factors leading to student dropout is that it forces local staff to better understand the school sources of dropout problems and to think about possible solutions in more creative ways. By considering the theory of how deficiencies in each key school component can destroy student motivation to stay in school, local educators can confront the ways schools themselves should change to reduce dropouts. Working through the theory-based reasons under each component that link particular school reforms to student motivation, local staff can decide which components should take priority at their own site and develop their own explanations for trying new approaches to increase the holding power of their school. Most important, with an understanding of the underlying component they seek to improve, local staff can find or invent the particular programmatic reforms that can address the generic component at their

own site. For example, under the key component of the human climate of support, there are numerous ways for a local staff to personalize positive student-adult relationships in the school for each at-risk student, each fitting a somewhat different local organization of staffing, scheduling or grouping and a particular redefinition and monitoring of staff roles and responsibilities.

The alternative is often to ask a local staff to buy into some brand-name prepackaged program that has several facets intended to reduce dropouts, under the sponsorship of a well-known educational researcher or reformer or with a catchy title or acronym of appeal, such as "success," "accelerated," "community-based," "student-centered," or "SMART." Some packages actually are primarily concerned with the processes of implementing change and involving staff, providing few outlines or guidance on the content of change, which cannot of itself force staff attention on underlying factors that need reform. Some other packages may be based on well-grounded theories of particular school effects on students, but their adoption encourages local staff to implement particular formulas and practices rather than understanding the reasons the particular reforms might work and what modifications would not damage their essential features.

Many of the most promising current dropout prevention programs are based on short lists of key approaches, much like what is being recommended here, including the Philadelphia program and the Hispanic programs described in previous chapters of this volume. The best of these are more than lists, of course, including theory-based reasons why proposed categories of change will lead to better student engagement with school goals and school life. These provide local educators with the stimuli to set priorities among a broad range of changes, and to

develop a deep understanding of what each change should involve to implement local versions and monitor and modify them over time for true effectiveness.

Basic reforms of roles and structures

The results of analyses of the match between dropout prevention theory and practice indicate that much more basic school reform under each component of the typology is needed if major inroads are to be made toward reducing the remaining dropout problems. Currently most school administrators report they frequently give major emphases to many if not all of the components, but students continue to dropout from some schools at alarming rates so the administrators' approaches are obviously not bold or intense enough to solve the problems.

Thinking about the sources of dropouts from the perspective of student motivation helps us to understand why current programs are insufficient and which basic reforms are called for. Dropout students rank failure in schoolwork at the top of their reasons for quitting school, but the available programs for more academic success appear to primarily add on remedial offerings that prepare students for the current academic hurdles, rather than make more fundamental changes in the content of learning activities and the criteria for evaluating and responding to at-risk student efforts. Approaches to increase relevance of school work usually mean adding career guidance and vocational course to the program, rather than bringing the real world regularly into learning activities through redesign of the curriculum towards problem solving applications and regular references to each student's own community heritage. Poor relations with school staff is the second most important reason given by students for dropping out, but improvements in the human climate of the school do not currently get as high priority as other components. Reforms

are needed to change the atmosphere from the current emphases on control and sorting of students to support and caring of individual learners through major modifications in the roles and responsibilities of teachers and students. Services to assist with outside problems are the least frequent element of current dropout prevention approaches even in schools where outside factors are a prime reason for students dropouts. Integration of services into an effective school community is a major challenge that goes well beyond the programs now available in most schools.

Some of the approaches described in the chapters of this volume and some other small experimental alternative schools (Whelage et al., 1990) do attempt to motivate at-risk students in new ways to stay in school, but if the continuing national dropout problem is to be solved, more bold ideas must be widely implemented to close the gap between good theory and actual practice of dropout prevention for at-risk students.

Figure One

TYPOLOGY OF SOURCES OF STUDENT MOTIVATION TO STAY IN SCHOOL AND WORK HARD ON SCHOOL LEARNING GOALS.

		Type of Organizational Environment	
		Formal (School Academic Goals)	**Informal** (School Social Relations)
Point of Reference	**Internal** (Within School Experiences)	Opportunities for Academic success	Supportive Human Climate
	External (Connections with World Outside School)	Relevance of Schoolwork to Student's Community and Future	Help with a Student's Outside Problems

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